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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

International drug control

Human rights questions

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 7 December 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As a representative of the State that is chairing the statutory bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement by the heads of the CIS States members in connection with the tenth anniversary of the Commonwealth's establishment, adopted on 30 November 2001 in Moscow (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 35, 89, 95, 97, 111, 119 and 166.

(*Signed*) S. **Lavrov**

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Annex to the letter dated 7 December 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the heads of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in connection with the tenth anniversary of the Commonwealth's establishment

Adopted on 30 November 2001

We, the heads of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), assessing the complicated path traversed by the Commonwealth in 10 years and drawing conclusions with regard to this period, which was replete with events and was of exceptional importance, should like to point out the following.

The Commonwealth came into being during an historic turning point, when our countries were confronted with the task, unprecedented in scope, of the radical restructuring of political and economic relations in the vast Eurasian land space. The Commonwealth's achievement in ensuring that the process in which its States members attained sovereignty was conducted in an orderly manner and did not give rise to profound geopolitical turmoil cannot be doubted. It basically succeeded in maintaining the links between peoples that had come into being over the centuries, mitigating to a certain degree the social and economic consequences of the disintegration of the single State, and ensuring the institutional and the legal conditions for equitable dialogue and cooperation. CIS promoted the establishment of the independent States and the free choice by each of them of their own model of State and economic construction and their own path of integration into the world community and also became a useful instrument for solving a number of specific problems.

Far from everything that was planned has been implemented. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the Commonwealth possesses considerable positive potential, which can and must be put to use for the good of our peoples. Deepening multilateral cooperation within CIS is absolutely in keeping with the national interests of the States members and is proceeding along the same course as general world trends.

The common desire of our countries to achieve stable and consistent socio-economic development and dignified integration into the world community is a sound basis for interaction within the CIS framework. We see the Commonwealth's raison d'être in promoting the achievement of these goals through the cooperation and joint efforts of the States members. The main criterion for evaluating its activities is practical results in the task of increasing the prosperity of the citizens of our States, ensuring that they have guarantees of broad rights in the fields of education, health care, social protection, cultural development, and mutual relations — in short, really improving the lives of people.

We consider it necessary to consistently imbue the Commonwealth's work with a specific content, concentrating on those areas where joint efforts can achieve the greatest effect.

The objective interest in intensive commercial and economic cooperation — the basis for the entire range of interaction within CIS — is a result not only of the

historically interrelated nature of the economies of our countries, but also, to an increasing extent, the processes of globalization. Regional and subregional integration is opening up opportunities for jointly adapting to the political and economic realities of the contemporary world and is making it possible to effectively use the advantages of globalization, while eliminating its negative consequences, first of all, in the economic and social areas. Cooperation with regard to external-trade policies and protecting the States members' domestic markets is important in this context.

We attach key importance to the establishment of a free-trade zone in the CIS area, with account taken of the interests of all partners. This effort must lead to the gradual elimination of barriers in mutual trade, create an effective payment and settlement system, and establish a corresponding legal basis making it possible to ensure fair competition on the national markets.

The priority task of the economic cooperation is to step up integration-oriented efforts — production cooperation, investment activities and the work of joint industrial and financial structures. Particular attention will be accorded to the work of harmonizing the national foreign-trade, tax and customs legislation of the CIS States members.

Owing to their geopolitical situation, the Commonwealth countries are on the front line in the struggle against international terrorism and extremism and the transborder drug mafia, which have thrown down a challenge to the entire world. This places us before the imperative need to join efforts in order to rebuff common security threats in concert with the actions taken by the international community.

We once again declare our countries' determination to continue to carry out on a legal basis the set of joint measures for combating international terrorism and also aggression linked to drug trafficking, which constitute a direct threat to all the CIS States members. We shall enhance the effectiveness and coordination of the work conducted by security agencies and special services and provide effective support to the CIS Anti-Terrorist Centre. We welcome steps to counteract the offensive waged by international terrorists, particularly such steps as the establishment of the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian collective security region.

We confirm the readiness of the Commonwealth countries to participate actively in the efforts by the world community to establish a global security system capable of meeting new threats and challenges.

We view multilateral military and military-technical cooperation between interested States, including the strengthening of CIS Unified Anti-Air Defence System, as an important contribution to ensuring security.

We shall strive to bring about a speedy settlement by peaceful means of the armed conflicts in the territories of States members on the basis of the generally recognized norms and principles of international law, making full use of the Commonwealth's peacemaking potential. Duly recognizing the efforts by the Russian Federation, which has an important role in peacekeeping operations in the area of the CIS States, we intend to strive for a fairer distribution of the "peacemaking burden" in accordance with the obligations undertaken. We consider it necessary to systematize anti-crime cooperation on the part of the CIS countries, focusing it on combating organized crime, illegal drug and weapons trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in persons and money-laundering.

We shall continue to give great attention to cooperation with regard to the observance of basic human rights and freedoms in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law and the documents of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

We note the need to expand and deepen cooperation in the humanitarian area within the CIS framework and in the areas of education, culture, science and the exchange of information, which ultimately will ensure the spiritual, moral and physical health of the rising generation. Maintaining and supporting the Russian language as the means of communication between nations is a general concern on the part of all countries interested in developing the integration processes within the CIS framework.

We consider the question of cooperation by inter-State associations situated in the Commonwealth area as a matter of particular importance for the future of CIS. In this context, it is important to ensure that such associations are open and mutually transparent.

We support the idea of the establishment within the Commonwealth of a legal area oriented towards international standards in the field of inter-State relations and in the sphere of mutual relations between the State and citizens.

We shall seek to establish an effective mechanism for carrying out decisions and agreements within the CIS framework, focusing on increasing the responsibility of the States members for carrying out the obligations that they have undertaken.

Confirming our commitment to the Commonwealth's dynamic development, we base our efforts on the will of the millions of people linked by centuries-old ties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. Our peoples wish to see the Commonwealth as an area of stability, security, and harmony among nations, a region of stable political, economic, social and scientific and technical development that occupies a fitting place in the international community.

We, the heads of the CIS States members, are imbued with the determination to do everything possible to ensure that these aspirations become reality.